THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI TUESDAY 17 MARCH 2020

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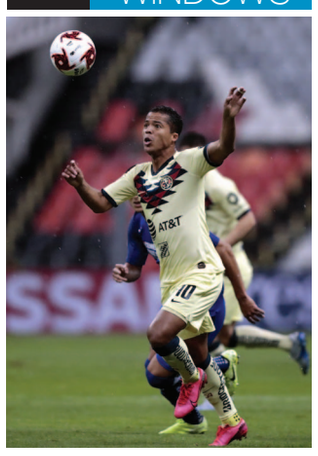
WINDOWS



America's Giovani Dos Santos vies for the ball during a Mexican soccer league match against Cruz Azul at Azteca Stadium in Mexico City on Sunday. — *AP*

Nirbhaya convicts move ICJ seeking stay on execution

New Delhi: As the day of hanging of the four death row convicts in Nirbhaya gang rape and murder case nears, three of them have moved the International Court of Justice at Hague seeking a stay on their "unlawful execution", alleging the probe leading to their conviction was "flawed" and they have been treated as "guinea pigs". The petition has been filed through the convicts' lawyer A.P. Singh. — *PTI*

Full report on Page 13

Yes Bank probe: ED to grill top bizmen

New Delhi/Mumbai: The ED has summoned top corporate honchos, including Reliance Group chairman Anil Ambani and Essel Group promoter Subhash Chandra, to appear before it this week in connection with its money laundering probe against Yes Bank promoter Rana Kapoor and others, officials said.

Full report on Page 8

After Kerala, Raj moves SC on CAA

New Delhi: The Congress government in Rajasthan moved the Supreme Court on Monday challenging the validity of the CAA, saying it is violative of the principle of secularism, which is part of the "basic structure" of the Constitution. — *PTI*

Full report on Page 4

COUNTERPOINT

Fever, tension, shivering? It's not corona, it's due to overdose of corona news!

WEATHER

Max: 27°C
Min: 16°C
RH: 49%
Rainfall: 10%

Forecast: Sunny

ASTROGUIDE

Vikari: Uttarayana
Tithi: Phalguna Bahula Navami till 3.25 am (Wednesday)
Star: Moola till 11.49 am
Varjyam: 10.10 am to 11.49 am; 9.54 pm to 11.35 pm
Durmuhurtam: 8.49 am to 9.37 am; 11.11 pm to 11.59 pm
Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.30 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.28 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 1.45 PM
MOONSET TODAY 12.18 PM

■ RBI sees slowdown in growth ■ 'Social distancing' to expand

C-virus count 114; govt bars all entry from UK, Europe, Turkey

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 16

In a bid to contain the spread of novel coronavirus in India — with the number of positive vases reaching 114 on Monday — the government has banned the entry of passengers from the United Kingdom, member states of the European Union as well as the European Free Trade Association, and Turkey. The airlines have been asked not to board passengers from these nations for India with effect from 1200 GMT on March 18, 2020 and enforce this at the port of initial departure. Also, the government has said passengers coming from or transiting through the UAE, Qatar, Oman and Kuwait will need compulsory quarantine for a minimum period of 14 days. This too will be effective from March 18.

The government said that both these instructions are temporary measures and will be in force till March 31 and will be reviewed subsequently. After a meeting of the Group of Ministers, the government has issued an advisory asking all educational institutions, gyms, etc to be shut and travel to be avoided as a part of "social distancing" measures.

With four new cases detected on Monday, the total number of positive cases of Covid-19 in India is now 114. Out of this, 17 persons have been discharged after being cured, and there have been two deaths. One each fresh case was reported from Maharashtra, Odisha, Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir and Kerala, the health ministry said. However, Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan claimed that three more people have tested positive in the state on Monday, taking the total number of cases to 24. The contact tracing activity of these positive cases has led to the identification of over 5,200 people, who are kept under surveillance, the health ministry said.

In Agra, a 25-year-old woman, whose husband in Bengaluru is hospitalised with coronavirus, has tested positive for Covid-19, three days after she fled from a hospital without telling the authorities, officials said.

The fourth batch of 53 evacuees from Iran arrived on Monday and is being quarantined at the Army facility in Jaisalmer. All passengers are reported to be asymptomatic at present.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said there has been a coordinated response to the coronavirus outbreak and asserted that "no stone is being left unturned" to ensure that people remain healthy.

"Our doctors, nurses, healthcare workers are putting in great efforts. They are out there, helping people. We will always cherish their contribution... Responsible citizens can add great strength to the fight against Covid-19. I am sure our citizens will not do any thing that puts the

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Anti-HIV drugs' mix crucial in treatment

Jaipur: A combination of two anti-HIV drugs has proved crucial in the treatment of coronavirus positive cases, a senior official of the Rajasthan government said. Additional chief secretary Rohit Kumar Singhsaid the patients' condition improved after they were administered the anti-HIV drugs.

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People wear protective masks to contain the spread of Covid-19 pandemic at Khan Market in New Delhi on Monday. — *PTI*

Delhi bans gatherings of 50 or more; no wedding curbs

Order to cover Shaheen Bagh sit-in; malls stay open

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 16

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday said that any gathering — religious, family, social, political or cultural — of over 50 people will not be allowed in the city till March 31 due to the coronavirus outbreak. The operations of all weekly markets in the city have been suspended and shopping malls directed to make available sanitisers at their entrances as well as in stores.

The chief minister indicated the ban on gatherings will also cover the protests at Shaheen Bagh and outside Jamia Millia Islamia. These places have been seeing sit-in protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, National Register of Citizens and National Population Register for over 90 days.

Arvind Kejriwal

"Gyms, nightclubs and spas will be closed till March 31. No religious, social, cultural and political gatherings of more than 50 people will be allowed in Delhi till March 31. The restriction is applicable to protests too," said Mr Kejriwal.

Asked if the ban will cover the Shaheen Bagh protests too, the chief minister said: "It (ban) will be applicable for everyone, be it a protest or any other gathering."

Mr Kejriwal said there were no restrictions on weddings but people were advised to postpone the dates as far as possible. "All autorickshaws and taxis will be disinfected free to prevent the spread of the deadly disease", he said.

Mr Kejriwal said that of the seven people who had tested positive for Covid-19 in the national capital, four are still recovering. "We have arranged sufficient beds if cases increase and hospitalisation is needed. Quarantine facilities have been set up at three hotels — Lemon Tree, Red Fox, Ibis," he added.

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STALEMATE IN MADHYA PRADESH

Gov, Kamal set for clash after new vote order

Speaker adjourns House till Mar. 26; no floor test; SC will hear BJP's plea

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, MARCH 16

Madhya Pradesh governor Lalji Tandon seems to be heading for a confrontation the with state legislature, after issuing a fresh directive on Monday to the Kamal Nath government to face a floor test in the Assembly on Tuesday.

The governor's order, the second one in the last 24 hours, came in the wake of the Budget Session of the Assembly being adjourned till Mach 26 without holding a floor test for the Kamal Nath government to prove its majority on its opening day on Monday, as directed by the governor a couple of days ago.

In a strongly-worded letter to the chief minister, Mr Tandon dismissed the reasons assigned by the former to skip the floor test on Monday as "baseless and meaningless" and cautioned him that "it will be deemed that the Kamal Nath government no longer enjoyed a majority if it does not a face floor test in the Hose on Tuesday".

The governor, who shot off his letter to the chief minister on Monday evening, also took serious exception to the way Mr Nath sought to justify the decision to dump his directive to face a floor test, describing it "unparliamentary".

The chief minister, in a letter to the governor on Monday morning, dubbed his directive to face a trust vote in the House as "partisan".

The governor's missive to the chief minister came as the Budget Session of the MP Assembly, which began on Monday, was adjourned till March 26 without the government facing the floor test.

Mr Kamal Nath later met the governor at Raj Bhavan on Monday night and claimed his government enjoys a majority, ruling out holding a floor test in the Assembly. Mr Nath also dared the BJP to table a no- confidence motion against his 15-month-old Congress government if they wanted to test its strength in the House.

"I met the governor and thanked him for his address on the opening day of the Budget Session. We are in a majority today so no question of a floor test.

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> **We are in a majority today so no question of a floor test. Those who claim that we don't have a majority should move a no-confidence motion against my govt...**
>
> **— Kamal Nath**
> *MP chief minister*

> **It will be deemed that the Kamal Nath government no longer enjoyed a majority if it does not a face floor test in the Hose on Tuesday**
>
> **— Lalji Tandon**
> *MP governor*

Madhya Pradesh governor Lalji Tandon, chief minister Kamal Nath and others arrive for the Budget Session of the Assembly in Bhopal on Monday. — *PTI*

Former CJI Ranjan Gogoi nominated to Rajya Sabha

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 16

President Ram Nath Kovind has nominated former Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi to the Rajya Sabha. A notification in this regard was issued by the ministry of home affairs late on Monday. The notification states that the nomination has been made to fill the vacancy caused due to the retirement of one of the nominated member.

Justice Gogoi was one of the five judges who had pronounced the verdict last year on the politically-sensitive Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid title suit and was also one of the four judges who had held an unprecedented press conference in 2018, which was perceived by many as a revolt against the then CJI Deepak Mishra. Justice Gogoi had retired in November last year.

Justice Gogoi along with Justice S.A. Bobde, Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, Justice S. Abdul

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Sensex crashes again, down 2,713 pts

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, MARCH 16

The markets' bounce back on Friday proved short-lived, as the Sensex and the Nifty-50 fell close to eight per cent on Monday under heightened fears of an impending coronavirus-led economic slump and its impact on corporate earnings.

In across-the-board selling, the Sensex fell by 7.96 per cent, closing a massive 2,713.41 points down at 31,390.07, its second biggest fall in history. The Nifty-50 too fell by 7.61 per cent and closed at 9,197.40, down by 757.80 points.

> **Tuesday seems to offer no respite as the overnight action by major central banks which cut its lending rate to near zero**

Tuesday seems to offer no respite as the overnight action by major central banks, including the US Federal Reserve, which cut its lending rate to near zero and also announced quantitative easing programme worth $700 billion, failed to enthuse Asian and European markets, and in opening trade on Monday the US market had to be halted as benchmark indices hit the lower circuit. Stocks dropped eight per cent in the first minutes of trading on Wall Street.

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WPI inflation eases to 2.26% in Feb.

New Delhi: Wholesale price index (WPI) based inflation softened to 2.26 per cent in February on the back of cheaper food items and vegetables, the government data showed on Monday. In January, the WPI inflation stood at 3.1 per cent and in the year-ago same period it was at 2.93 per cent. — *PTI*

People gather near the site of an explosion in Lagos, Nigeria, on Sunday. At least 19 were killed in the suspected gas explosion. — *AP*

Ex-military chief Gantz gets shot at forming Israeli govt

Jerusalem, March 16: Israel's ex-military chief Benny Gantz was nominated Monday to try to form a government but further talks were expected with his bitter rival, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, on an emergency alliance to fight coronavirus.

Mr Gantz, who heads the centrist Blue and White party, called for "unity" and urged PM Netanyahu to join him as Israel seeks to end a crippling political stalemate after three inconclusive elections in less than a year. "We must not have a fourth election," Mr Gantz said, after he was formally nominated to attempt to form an administration by President Reuven Rivlin.

Benny Gantz

"I'll do everything to form in as few days as possible a national, patriotic and broad government."

Mr Gantz, 60, won recommendations on Sunday from 61 legislators, a razor thin majority in the 120-member Knesset, or Parliament. His backers did not include Mr Netanyahu's right-wing Likud, but Mr Rivlin has urged the two men to work together in an emergency unity government, in order to avoid a national policy vacuum in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

"It is possible that forming a government quickly will require interim arrangements for the coming months," Mr Rivlin said Monday. Mr Gantz's path to a longer-term stable coalition is difficult given the deep divisions within the factions that backed him. — *AFP*